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CEREBUS
mothers & daughters
14

164
NOV

NOTE • FROM • THE PRESIDENT

Coming up on the end of Jet Lag Month; October 26, referendum day in Canada (actually a plebiscite; another example of Mulroney getting the cart before the horse). Still hung over from a two day celebration of the Blue Jays' World Series win.

****

Phoenix was great. When I arrived it was 104 degrees. Amazing.

Did an interview for the 5 o'clock news on the local CBS outlet KTSP. Bud Wilkinson was the interviewer. A nice relaxed pace to that one; which was quite a contrast to KTVK (ABC) about an hour later where they had double booked guests for the noon news and ended up dropping the Tour Press Kit on news anchor Mike More while he was *doing* the Noon News and telling him he was doing the interview (on tape) immediately after the news was over. I had to brief him as quickly as possible in the forty or so seconds before the cameras started rolling while everyone in the area was coming unglued. Television is nerve-wracking at the best of times so this one was quite an experience. Then another relaxed interview at the aptly named KOOL AM/FM radio station with Louis Valdivia after the limo driver gave me an hour long tour of Phoenix and environs. I always ask who else they've driven around and Gib came up with Bo Jackson and Barry Goldwater. Bo Jackson has a waterfall and winding river in the master bedroom of his house. Barry Goldwater wanted to know where he could score some bimbos. Y'gotta love those family values Republicans. Next morning it was a live radio interview on KURY AM with morning guy Mark Waldi. Nothing like trying to be bright, lively and witty at seven o'clock in the morning. We got great coverage in the *Arizona Republic*, the *Phoenix Gazette*, the *Mesa Independent*, *New Times*, *State Press* and the *Scottsdale Progress*.

The big surprise was that the signing at Mike Mellvey's *Atomic Comics* was sparsely attended. Smallest turn-out since Miami, so everyone got a really good sketch (some got several good sketches). Martin Wagner had come up for the signing and Con and sold virtually NO copies of *Hepcats*. In fact, he made the mistake of drawing a Marvel character for someone and soon had a line-up of kids with backing boards wanting sketches of Spider-man, etc. etc. He finally called a halt and will never make that mistake again. We were both interviewed by James Owen for the *Comics News and Reviews* cable access show. The convention was a sparse crowd again, but very enthusiastic. After the huge turn-out in Washington, I'd have to say that it felt very good to actually be able to talk to everyone individually and doodle casually on a sketch for four or five minutes instead of mass-producing the same Cerebus head.

And by the time I got back to the hotel on Saturday night, the Jays had clinched the American League East. Yippee!

****

An hour before I was leaving for the airport to go to Seattle, Fred phoned to say that they had sold a grand total of *one* dealer's table at the convention. There was another convention being held the same day in Tacoma with an Image artist as guest. Fred had offered tables for ten dollars each and had no takers. I told him to phone Donna *(Desert Peach)* Barr who was going to be a guest at the con and declare open season on dealer's tables for any artist who wanted to show up. Rantz Hoseley called a few minutes later and I gave him the same message. The car arrived to get me. My parting words to Gerhard: "That's what I love about this job. Predictability."

Nail-biting time again on the way to the airport. The Jays battling Oakland for the American League championship. They were up 6-0 when I arrived at Lester Pearson, 7-0 as I boarded the plane. Airborne, the pilot announced that it was 7-2. Aaagh! He announced the final score, 9-2 somewhere over Manitoba to a smattering of polite applause. Very Air Canada.

Thursday I spent most of the afternoon being interviewed by John Marshall for an article in the *Seattle Post-Intelligencer*; my first time at a Hearst newspaper. John had requested a piece of artwork for the article featuring the P-I globe which Gerhard did a magnificent job rendering from a bad second-generation faxed photo (cleverly rendering part of it in micro-tiny cross-hatching so they'd have to run it full size or lose definition: it worked! The picture took up almost all of the front page of the Lifestyles section). *Hype* came out that week with a full page article written by Thomas Kintner (remember *Nostalgia Television* in Washington? Yeah him.) that was so enthusiastic in the treatment of its subject that it could scarcely be described as journalism. Thanks, Tom. Friday I did a radio interview with Jill Kenly at KEZX-FM that went really well and then got dropped off at the Pike Place Market a couple of hours ahead of the next interview so I got to play tourist for a change. I arrived at the *Pink Door* restaurant/tavern for an interview with Brett Siler for *The Stranger*. In a peculiar mood, fortified by endless Pyramid draughts I rattled on for about three hours about everything under the sun for an article that was slated for about eight hundred words. I got to see *Golden Age Collectibles* in the Market which ended up *not* being the Tour store through miscommunication between Fred and myself. Great store. The signing at *Zanadu Comics* downtown went very well; almost four and a half hours. Perry Plush is a great guy; been in business three years longer than I've been doing *Cerebus*, so we got to reminisce about the Dark Ages of the Direct Market quite a bit. I also got to meet Tom Hart, the employee who persuaded Perry to become part of the Tour. Colin Upton showed up the next day at *Zanadu*'s University district store, having come down from Vancouver for the Sunday con. And a new record was established; SIX hours — from afternoon to early evening. Ed *(Lowlife)* Brubacher dropped by as well; one of the legion of new Seattlian (Seattloid?) cartoonists in residence. By the time I got back to the hotel, the Jays had lost game one of the World Series to Oakland 3-1. The next day, I went down to face *Strange Con* by myself (Ger had left a phone message that he had managed to drop his car key into Lake Erie while taking his sailboat out of the water for the winter). Rantz and Randy were there, as well as James Earnest and his wife Carol (James with his self-published book about juggling and Carol with her Rat cartoons). Also setting up were Phil Foglio with *XXXenophile* and other works of his (assisted by his girl-friend Kaia). Colin and Roberta *(Naughty Bits)* Gregory came in a few minutes later and set up a display of their work (both self-published and not) and then Donna Barr, fresh from rehearsals for the *Desert Peach* musical opening in November. And there we all sat, sketching and joking and trading our publications. A steady throng wound around the room and I was busy sketching and signing from 10 AM to 4 PM. Since I sold the most artwork and books, I took everyone to dinner in the hotel restaurant and we all sat and Artist Schmoozed until I had to leave for the airport. In the airport bar, I settled in to watch a couple of innings of game two when I heard the bartender mention to a customer that he had seen a great article on Cerebus in the *Post Intelligencer*. He then mentioned the con in Tacoma had been an absolute bust. The artist had cancelled at the last minute. Is that weird or what? One convention with all artists and no dealers and the other all dealers and no artist! It turned out that the guy he was talking to was Rod Dyke, the owner of *Golden Age Collectibles*, so we got a chance to chat a little bit and I promised to do a signing in his store the next time I was in Seattle. Atlanta was up 4-2 when they announced my flight. With the time difference, I arrived back in Toronto at six in the morning. It wasn't until I put on the radio in the car that I heard about the Upside Down Canadian Flag Incident and, more significantly, that the Jays had pulled it out in the ninth, winning 5-4.

CEREBUS

NO. 164 NOVEMBER 1992

DAVE SIM
President

GERHARD
Vice-President

LINDA BERZINS
Typesetting

MOTHERS & DAUGHTERS
a novel

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BOOK ONE
(Cerebus 151 to Cerebus 162)
Flight

•

BOOK TWO
(Cerebus 163 to Cerebus 174)
Women

•

BOOK THREE
(Cerebus 175 to Cerebus 188)

•

BOOK FOUR
(Cerebus 189 to Cerebus 200)

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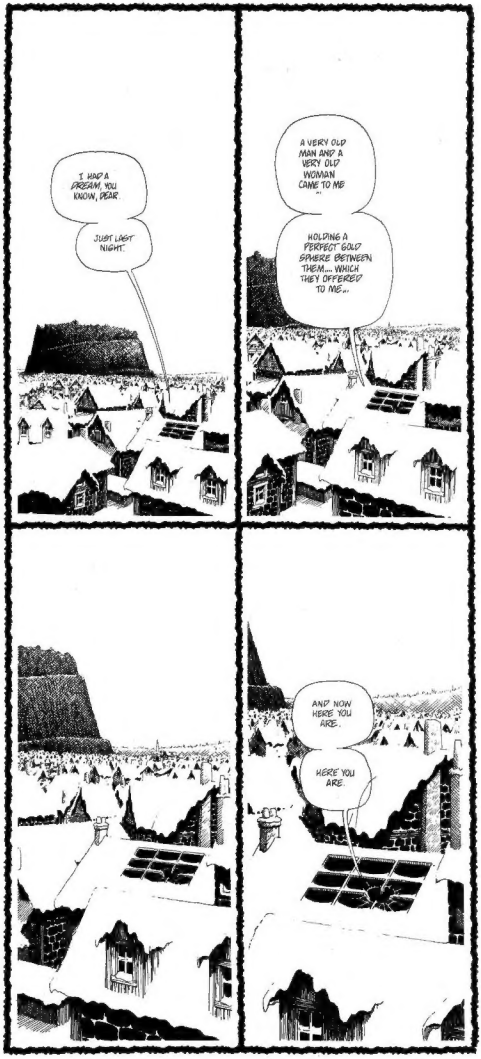
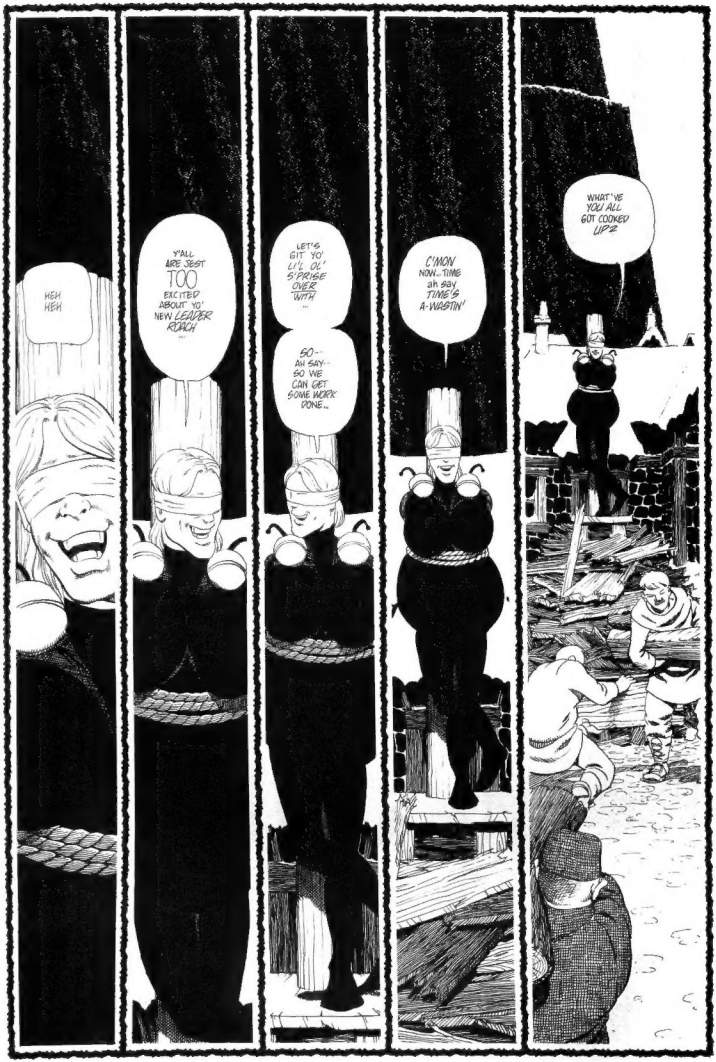
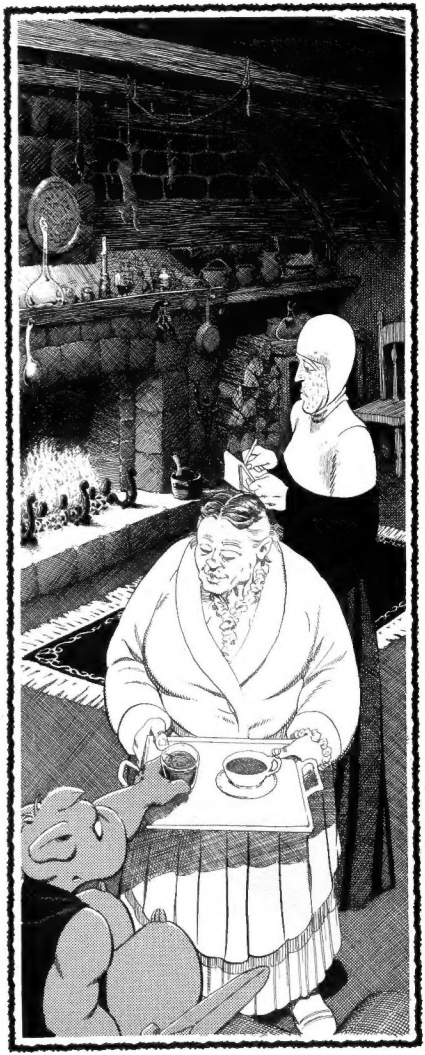

I HAD A DREAM, YOU KNOW, DEAR.
JUST LAST NIGHT.
A VERY OLD MAN AND A VERY OLD WOMAN CAME TO ME ...
HOLDING A PERFECT GOLD SPHERE BETWEEN THEM.... WHICH THEY OFFERED TO ME...
AND NOW HERE YOU ARE.
HERE YOU ARE.


HEH HEH
Y'ALL ARE JEST TOO EXCITED ABOUT YO' NEW LEEVER ROACH ...
LET'S GIT YO' LI'L OL' S'PRISE OVER WITH ...
SO-- AH SAY-- SO WE CAN GET SOME WORK DONE...
C'MON NOW.. TIME ah say TIME'S A-WASTIN'
WHAT'VE YOU ALL GOT COOKED UP?

UM... MR. COORDINATOR I'M SORRY YOU CAN'T ...
YOU CAN'T COME IN HERE
THERE'S A FUNERAL TODAY...
SMAT
YOU--
YOU THERE!
LET GO OF THOSE PROPERTIES
WAP!



This is Vera, by the way. We've become quite close over the years. She's permanently assigned as my . . . custodian is a nice word for it, I guess. She's supposed to write down everything that I say. I don't think I've said fifty words in five years so her stenographic skills are apt to be a bit rusty. Also, I imagine she's a bit worried as to how long her few wee pads of paper are going to hold out. Add to that the fact that Vera recognizes you and realizes old What's-Her-Name will want to be notified immediately of your . . . return . . . and Vera has herself a real problem. Indeed she does. If she runs to get the guards she'll miss what I have to say to you. If she stays to write down what I tell you, then you get some valuable information old What's-Her-Name would really rather you didn't have.

It's very like a chess game, isn't it, dear? And whichever way Vera turns, she finds herself stalemated; neutralized. Her primary mandate is to write down everything I say and her secondary one is to prevent me from entertaining any visitors. So, the Goddess drops you in through the skylight.

The Goddess is a wonderful chess player.

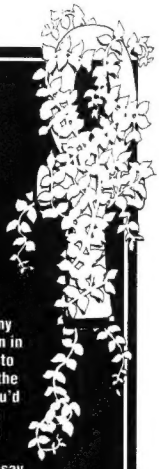
All women read minds, with very few exceptions.

It's a little more complicated than that. "Woman's intuition" is a nice way of putting it. "Women are more sensitive" is another way of putting it. A not-so-nice way of putting it is that women rape men's minds the way men rape women's bodies. It's not an exact analogy, of course, because rape is invasion and invasion is the man's way, not the woman's way; absorption and consumption are the woman's way; what they're built for. Consider the two genders; one that invades and violates and the other that absorbs and consumes. The nice way of putting it is that they're complementary. The not-so-nice way of putting it is that they deserve each other; serve each other right.

Some women are more efficient at reading minds than are others. Some only pick up impressions; they just get a "feeling" you could say. Others it's as easy as reading a book. For many of them it's like eating a piece of candy; absorbing the entirety of a mind in one gulp.

The matriarchists misinterpret, intentionally I think, the true nature of a woman. They persist in the notion that a woman must adhere to a single male, forming a family unit which they then endeavour to dominate as a superior force. This is nonsensical. The best working model for a woman's life is the beehive; a solitary queen, serviced and catered to by a diverse group of males who exist exclusively to advance her cause. Those with wealth must serve as her personal treasury; those with brawn as her soldier/warriors; those with fertile minds serve as debating adversaries, allowing her to keep sharp her mental skills and to dissect and reinforce her beliefs and theories. The woman who owns the allegiance of the wealthiest, the strongest and the most brilliant of consorts; to her pass the reigns of absolute power. Inevitably she will rise, like heavy cream through thin milk, to the very summit of human existence.

Astoria
Kevillist Origins



A daughter thinks her youth and beauty are timeless. I remember walking through a marketplace with one of my senior advisors and her beautiful daughter (who was then in her mid-teens). A flower-seller extended a single flower to her, with his compliments. This she accepted with only the slightest acknowledgement. My advisor said to her, "You'd better enjoy it while you can. It doesn't last forever, you know." The girl's attentions were drawn elsewhere, to a booth nearby with a display of gaudy trinkets and she ventured no reply. Now in her late twenties, needless to say, the adoring throngs of men who have surrounded her all of her life have dwindled to a handful of low and deceitful characters; charlatans, petty criminals and brigands to a one. Gone are the industrious, reliable and noteworthy suitors of days past. One of these will undoubtedly father her children someday and she will live out her days in degraded circumstances, going from unsuitable mate to unsuitable mate. Her children, when they are of an age to understand, will pity her, mock her, be disgusted by her.

The Goddess has neither mercy upon, nor patience with the willful, the proud and the self-centered woman.

Cirin
The New Matriarchy

Clerk:
Very nice, but of course the drop style earring is for more formal occasions.

Astoria:
Depending on how our discussions turn out, Cirin is either going to accede to my proposals and form a coalition Cirinist/Kevillist government or she's going to throw me back in prison to rot for the rest of my life. Sounds pretty formal to me.

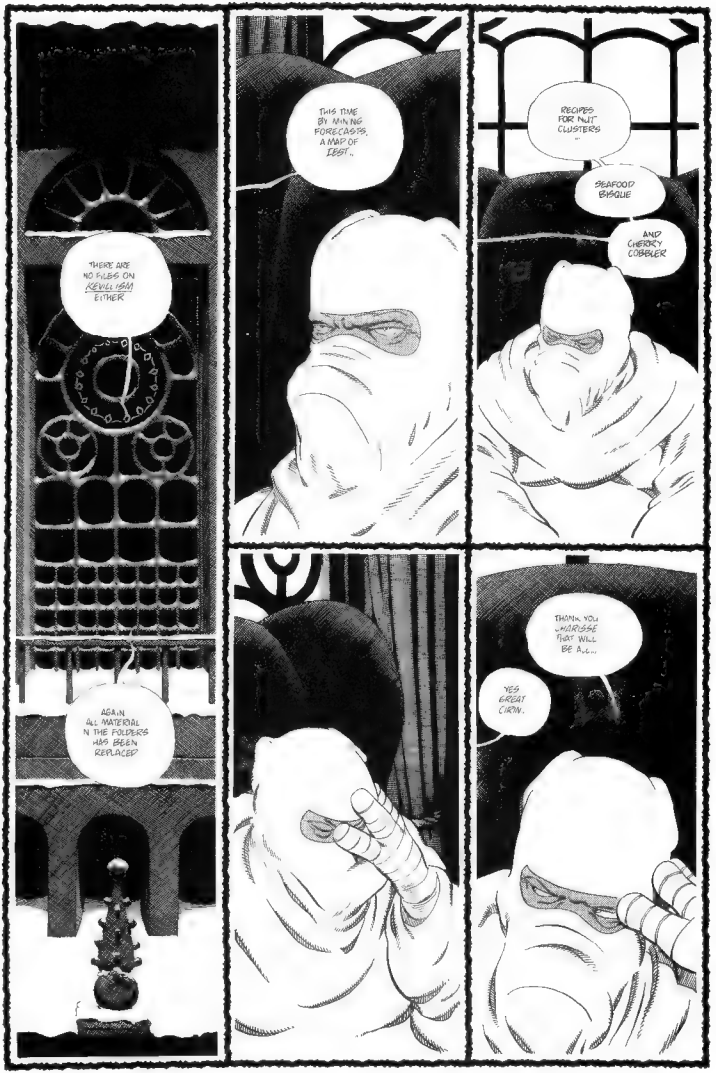
WELL... GET ON WITH IT..
HEH-HEH. WHAR'S WASSY WHARE'S MY STORE?
SK-TCH
??? ?
?
GASP! GASP! GASP! GASP! GASP!
IT'S HIM! COCKROACHMAN!! PUNISHMENTROACH! TARIMROACH!
HE'S A GHOST!
HE'S ANOTHER ALBINO!
HE'S BACK FROM THE DEAD!
DEATH! DEATH!!
DEAD ROACH
ZOMBIE ROACH!
CADAVER ROACH!
ACT CASUAL
SH
H-DO THE *TORCH ...
HUM DE DUM
DON'T STARE
I... am a roach ... nevermore

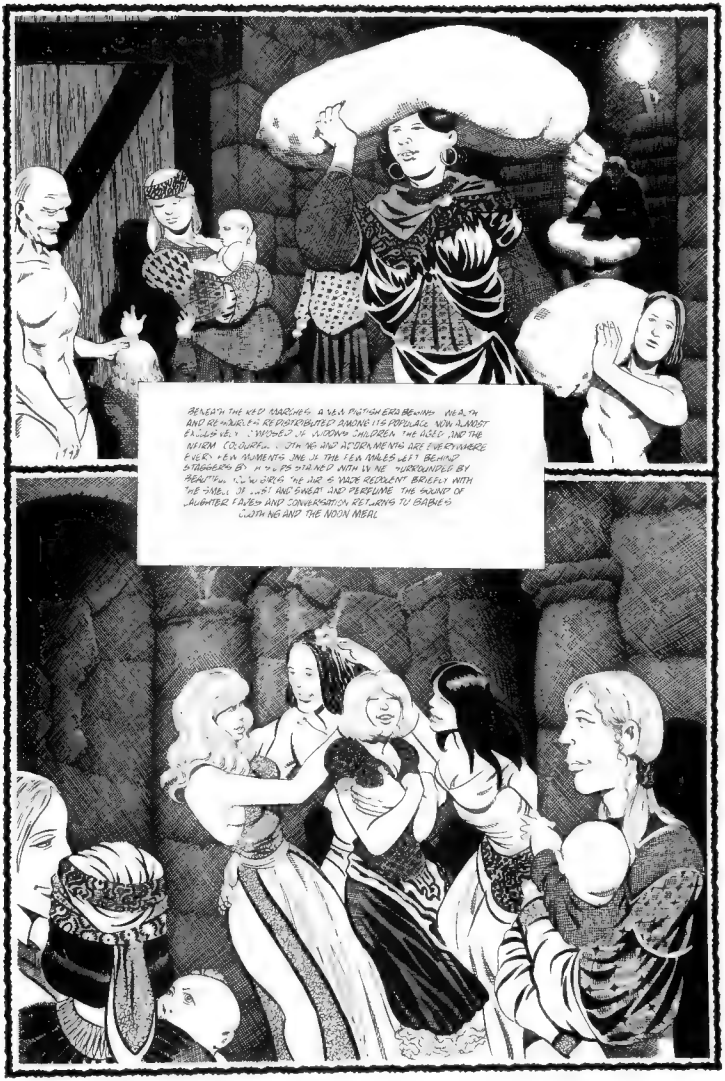
I am human ... nevermore.
I am... $WOON mortals.
OH, GREAT AND POWERFUL $WOONMORTALS..
no, no, no
$WOON...
...comma...
mortals
OH, GREAT AND POWERFUL $WOONCOMMA MORTALS...
You try my patience ... I am
just $WOON

OH, GREAT AND POWERFUL JUSTSWOON...
Silence.
What mischief is this?
Why have you bound my beloved sister $NUFF?
?
WHO?
IT WASN'T US..!
BADGUNS DID IT..!
WE TOLD THEM NOT TO!
AND THEN THEY RAN AWAY!
WE DIDN'T KNOW WE WAS YOUR SISTER!
SHE WAS LIKE THAT WHEN WE FOUND HIM
WE DON'T EVEN HAVE A TORCH
IT WAS A JOKE
WE THOUGHT SHE ASKED US TO.
Release her...
now.
RELEASE HER!
CUT THE ROPES!
FREEDOM! FREEDOM!
PRAISE SISTER SNUFF
HERE COME IT
GOOD AFTERNOON
WE WERE JUST KIDDING!
NO HARM'S DONE!
PLEASE DON'T K... US..

You have... gained weight, my sister...
HUH?!
THIS- AH SAY THIS IS A COSTUME, SON
ONE HUNDRED PERCENT COTTON AND WOOL BLEND!
INFLATABLE BOOBS!
MAMMARY GLANDS THAT IS
Come.
We will find more suitable attire...
WHOA, NOW...
AH SAY HOLD ON, SON.
WHAT ABOUT THE DRAWING OF THE AGE OF THE BLATT RAE AND THE PAYLODROMADE?
SHOULDN'T I SAY, SHOULDN'T WE...?
That age is not for many thousands of years...
it was. a...
misapprehension

WELL, HE DIDN'T KILL US.
NOT YET, ANYWAY
PRAISE JUST SWOON!
SON!
AWRIGHT LISTEN HERE SON
MIGHTY JUST SWOON.
SO WHAT ARE WE NOW?
I DUNNO... JUSTSWOONIANS?
ALBINOITES?
I am your brother... and yet you call me ... "son"
my amusement is almost without limit
How I have missed your fabled wit
ha.
ha.
ha.
?
THAT'S ...AMAZIN...
THAT'S A REAL KNEE-SLAPPER ALL RIGHT

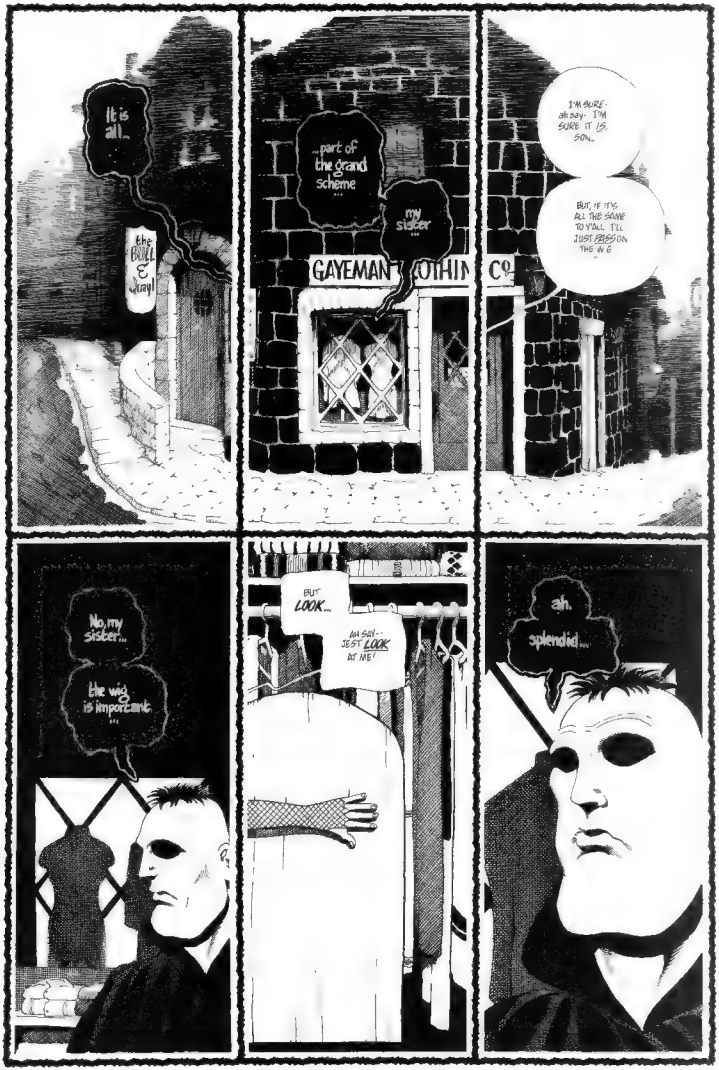

THERE ARE NO FILES ON KEWL GUY! EITHER!
AGAIN, ALL MATERIAL N THE FOLDERS HAS BEEN REPLACED
THIS TIME BY MINING FORECASTS. A MAP OF IBIS!..
RECIPES FOR NUT CLUSTERS
SEAFOOD BISQUE
AND CHERRY COBBLER
THANK YOU MARISSE THAT WILL BE ALL...
YES GREAT CHRN.

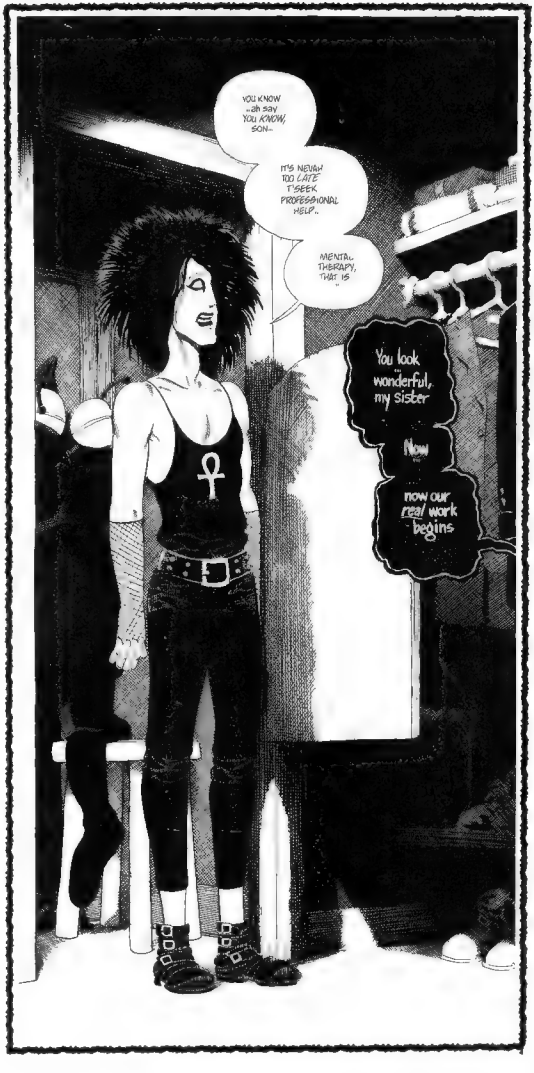

BENEATH THE RED MARQUEE, A NEW BRITISH ERA BEGINS. WEALTH AND RESOURCES REDISTRIBUTED AMONG ITS POPULACE. NOW ALMOST ENTIRELY SWOLLEN WITH WIDOWS' CHILDREN. THE NOISE AND THE MAYHEM COLOURFUL. CLOTHING AND ACCOMPANIMENTS ARE EVERYWHERE EVERYMEN MOMENTS ONE IS THE MEN MALES LEFT BEHIND STUMBLED BY MORE PRESSINGLY WITH WIVES HUSBANDS BY BEAUTIFUL. TWO GIRLS THE AIR IS MADE REDOLENT BRIEFLY WITH THE SMELL OF MUSK AND SWEAT AND PERFUME. THE SOUND OF LAUGHTER FADES AND CONVERSATION RETURNS TO BABIES CLOTHING AND THE NOON MEAL

"Reading" minds isn't the worst of it. The worst of it is changing the minds they absorb; planting contrary thoughts. Changing her mind, the saying goes, is a woman's perogative. Changing *others'* minds is a woman's darkest secret; the black cauldron of which we all partake. Some greedily, some guiltily. Some intentionally, some inadvertently. What's happened in Upper Felda; what is spreading throughout the civilised world; is an abomination. An abomination I was very helpful in bringing about and an abomination which can come to no good end. It is a very large and very dangerous force. Whose minds are being absorbed? Heads of state, business and economic and religious leaders. Whose minds are absorbing them? Unelected wives, grasping and opportunistic mistresses and concubines with handsome eyes and attractive figures. It seemed inconsequential at the outset, but mind-reading is like any other weapon of power and destruction. It will invariably gravitate to those least suited to wield it and those who are the most unscrupulous about its use. Simply put, the civilised world is being subjected to mental bullying and thuggery on a monumental scale of which it is completely

FINISH YOUR DRINK, DEAR...
I'M AFRAID WE'RE OUT OF TIME
SHE'S GONE TO GET THE GUARDS
THIS DOOR LEADS TO THE BASEMENT...
IT WILL LOCK AUTOMATICALLY BEHIND YOU...
THERE WILL BE A DOOR ON YOUR LEFT THAT LEADS UP TO THE ACCESSIBLE TAVERN

LIKE ALL OTHER TAVERNS, IT'S OFF LIMITS TO THE CURIOSITS...
"MEN ONLY"
THIS IS ENOUGH MONEY FOR FOOD AND LODGING FOR TONIGHT AND TOMORROW
I WILL ARRANGE FOR AN ACCOUNT IN YOUR NAME AFTER THAT..
YOU CAN STAY THERE INDEFINITELY IN COMPLETE SAFETY..
HOWEVER, IF YOU TRY TO LEAVE YOU'LL BE ARRESTED ON THE SPOT
THEY'LL BE READY FOR YOU THIS TIME, I'M...
BAM BAM BAM
GOODNESS! THEY'RE HERE ALREADY...
BAM BAM
HURRY ALONG NOW DEAR
I WAS LOVELY TO FINALLY MEET YOU
CLICK


It is all...
the BULL'S way!
...part of the grand scheme...
my sister...
GAYEMAN
I'M SURE- oh boy- I'M SURE IT IS, SON...
BUT, IF IT'S ALL THE SAME TO YA ALL I'LL JUST PASS ON THIS W G
No, my sister...
the wig is important...
BUT LOOK...
AH SIR- JEST LOOK AT ME!
ah. splendid...


YOU KNOW ..UH SAY YOU KNOW, SON..
IT'S NEVAH TOO LATE T'SEEK PROFESSIONAL HELP..
MENTAL THERAPY, THAT IS ..
You look wonderful, my sister
Now
now our real work begins

AARDVARK COMMENT

P.O. BOX 1674, STATION 'C', KITCHENER, ONTARIO N2G 4R2

For all of you people who hate Aardvark Comment, this would be a good one to skip. Having finished 163 ahead of time and having jumped straight into 164 in anticipation of October "jet lag month" (Phoenix, Seattle and Portland), I had a MOUND of letters, that even after careful and not-so-careful thinning is still a mound of letters. For those of you who like Aardvark Comment; dig in.

Dave:

Hi. It's me. M'Oak. Again.

I just bought the last couple of issues of your book, (11 & 12,) and I haven't read them yet. Or rather, I flipped through them in the comic store to get a feel for them. A few pictures of Cerebus flying through some bizarre version of reality struck me. A shot of Thatcher again. A *Cerebus* preview of a story involving some Pogo-Smurf type fellows. (Rather well done ones too, at first glance.) One of them, apparently, with a pie in his head. (That will need checking out). And something before the letters section entitled the "Last Waltz."

Hmmm.

The Last Waltz looked long and self indulgent. It was the first thing I read. In fact, it is not more than a few minutes after reading it that I am seated in front of the ol' number cruncher hacking out a letter to you. I haven't even read the story part of the comic yet. (Except to follow an encounter between the Roach and some dark haired seductress. Funny how stuff like that jumps out at you and demands attention . . .)

When I was in college, (briefly,) one of the things I found most disturbing was that you had all of these experienced teachers all around you who knew all kinds of stuff and from whom you could supposedly learn all kinds of wonderful things, except that you didn't. Instead of teaching you anything, they assigned you all these silly and boring projects. Over the course of my six month period of paid education, I only managed to convince one professor that the students could learn more, (MUCH more,) if the teachers were to set up drafting boards and start painting or inking or drawing some project of their own while the students gathered about to watch.

Watch their hands. Watch how they push the paint and render the image. *That* is what it's all about. Teaching, that is. A little kid doesn't say that he's going to "tell" somebody how to yo a yo-yo. They say that they're going to *SHOW someone how to yo.* (Note placement of capitalization.)

You let the students stand around and watch and ask questions as you paint or draw, and maybe explain what you're doing as you do it. *Then* you tell the students to come up with their own projects incorporating the techniques involved with the demonstration, and then go off and do it on their own. The students who are genuinely fascinated *will* perform at their peak.

Don't assign un-inspiring bullshit projects . . . Don't cater to students who are so programmed by high-school that they only understand grade point averages and direct instructions.

If a student, once given the freedom to incorporate their own dreams into their assignments, only looks up at the teacher with an absolute absence of comprehension and asks, "So, how will this be marked?", if a student has no dream to fill into the blank, then LET THE BRAINLESS DOOF FAIL BIG TIME! WE DON'T NEED UNINSPIRED INGRATES OUT THERE IN THE WORLD! LET THEM BECOME ACCOUNTANTS OR CELL PAINTERS FOR CHEESE BOX ANIMATION HOUSES! DON'T LET THEM RUIN, BY SHEER FORCE OF NUMBERS, THE EXPERIENCE OF LEARNING FOR THOSE WHO ACTUALLY GIVE A SHIT!!!

Ahem.

Besides being a tad unrealistic, I'm getting off topic.

What I'm trying to say is that the best way to teach somebody something is to let them watch as you do it yourself. Those college professors were more interested in teaching *ideas* and in 'molding young minds', than they were in showing people how to actually paint and draw. I asked one teacher why they were so bent on instilling their concepts of right and wrong in kids instead of teaching the technical stuff, like *how* to actually draw and paint. The answer was this:

"Oh, well you can't teach somebody how to paint. That you have to pick up on your own through practice."

To which my response was, (unspoken, that is,) "So why the hell am I paying you? What are you teaching me?"

Answer: (unvocalized, and possibly even *unrealized* by the stupid teachers themselves:) We are teaching you what to do with your abilities once you've taught them to yourself.

My response: "Holy fuck! I already *know* what I want to do! I don't need some butt-fuck illustrator who couldn't make it out in the professional world telling me what the hell I'm supposed to think. So long! I'm outta here! Hope you rot! And gimme back my fucking three thousand dollars you sorry lot of bean brains!"

I'll mold my own mind, thank you very much.

Those issues way back in the eighties when you and Diamond were throwing long winded verbal knives at each other . . . Those issues where you aired your side of the arguments involving the messy matter of who was screwing who on the publishing scene, were GOLD. In terms of the various arguments being flung about, it was merely a source of mildly entertaining distraction. To be honest, I don't think anybody without close kinship with the comics world could have found it

terribly gripping. There were too many names and complex problems being dealt with. And too little character development. And no pictures at all . . . It came off sounding as though it had been written by a fellow who has been wronged in some obscure argument and who was trying to justify himself. The problem was that the bulk of your audience probably didn't care very much. Like I said, it was almost entirely self indulgent.

But then, so is the artist at his drafting board toiling away at something loved. To learn anything, you have to sit quietly and watch the hands and the brush.

The whole series, including this latest, (Last Waltz,) has taught me more about what it is like to work and live within the world of comic book publishing than ANYTHING else I've seen, heard or read either before or since. Utterly invaluable. Very cool. Keep it up. (Hell, I've actually come to the point where I know enough of the names and obscure problems you talk about to find it more than just mildly entertaining . . .)

You know what I was told once when I was trying to describe the concept of self publishing to somebody? She squinted at me when I brought up the term, as I'm sure it was new to her, and then she nodded with recognition.

"Oh, yeah. Vanity Press."

I'd never made the connection between the two terms before then. I blinked and said something like, "Yeah, I guess that's what it is . . . Sort of. I never really thought about it bef-"

She told me that, Yes, they were definitely the same thing, and that only losers went with Vanity Press. "If your work isn't good enough for a publisher," she said, "you shouldn't be writing at all." etc.

We talked for a long time about this. I don't think I managed to alter her perception of things. I told her about concepts such as ABSOLUTE CONTROL over your own material. ABSOLUTE CONTROL over your own finances. And ABSOLUTE CONTROL over whether or not something is published regardless of what some editor/publisher/non-creator thinks of your work. — Those and various other idealistic things, all of which are only half true, of course, but which sound great in an argument, (and which are certainly more true than if you work with an established publishing company). I was surprised that she didn't even respond to the fact that you stand to make more money at the game if you don't leave your wages in the the hands of a bunch of paper pushers. I think she told me something about money being unimportant if you're truly dedicated to your art form, or something like that. I didn't think I'd bother tackling the concepts of food and shelter at that point. She was too far gone.

Basically, I think, it was her idea that unless you could manage to crack the acceptance barrier standing between a writer and a publishing house, (a barrier which can only properly be broken by large manila envelope-missiles containing manuscripts,) your work is not *worth* publishing.

Now, isn't *that* a convenient idea for all writers to be obsessed with, (from a publisher's point of view)? What seems more surprising is that people don't seem to click onto this; even after you try to explain it to them. I've spoken with a number of aspiring writers, *all* of whom are consumed with the need to be accepted by publishers. They may not like it. They gripe and complain. But they all believe they *need* that acceptance.

After thinking about it, it becomes even more distressing, because for the most part, it's true. The way things are organized now, that is.

The trade paperback industry is somewhat different than the comic book industry. From a financial perspective, and a sheer organizational perspective, it's virtually impossible to publish yourself. There are various kinks in the system linking Coles and W.H. Smith together with their distributors that make it really risky to do business unless you have a fuck load of titles to offer and a fuck load of cash to work with.

Such a kink is that bookstores have the option of returning all the books that don't sell. —Or rather, they tear the front covers off and send those back to the publishers for a full refund. You have to fucking guess at how many books you think might sell when you go to give figures to the printer. In comics, however, (as you know), the store owner either sells the issue or buries the cost of ordering too many copies. In comics, there is no risk for the publisher in that particular area. What you have to concentrate on instead is making damn sure you produce something the public will want to read, and that you give the comic store owner the incentive to order your titles. And *that* means giving him the ability to *sell* your titles. (Moondog . . ?)

I'm again off topic . . .

What this all boils down to is that if you can write and draw, then you can actually succeed in self publishing with comics. Not with trade paperbacks. Comics.

Dave, for a variety of reasons, the comic book medium is the best fucking story telling medium there is that I can think of. Certainly, there are limitations: No sound. (I envy film for the ability to put music to story. In my head, the two are so very intertwined . . .) No motion, and color is a bitch. But a comic can do everything a book can do and more, as you've proven. and there exist all the advantages that books offer over film, namely the ability to tell a story without having to cram it all into a hundred minute format which won't overflow the limits of a person's attention span. (Or his bladder, if he's bought one of those really big soft drinks with his popcorn.)

But the best part of all about comics is that you can do them all by yourself and it doesn't take a huge amount of money to do it. You don't need seventeen million dollars and a really expensive computer to show Cerebus braving the perils of the eighth sphere. And you don't need seventeen million dollars and a landslide of titles and underpaid authors to brave the perils of the wild and wacky trade paperback roller coaster. All you need to be able to do is tell a good story, draw a good picture and balance a budget.

Fuck! I *love* comics!

Yours, most inspired,

M'Oak.
349 Byng Ave.
Willowdale, Ontario
M2N 4L7
Canada!

Hey! Me, too.

★★★★★★★★★★

Dear Dave, etc.:

Geez! You and Gary just don't seem to be able to play nice together. Am I going to have to come over there and separate you two? No milk and cookies if you won't behave.

Cont'd

e-P-I
"JUST A SIMPLE PUBLICITY STUNT"
"YOU WANNA BE BIG IN SEATTLE DON'T YOU?"
AS SOON AS THIS IS OVER...
CEREBUS IS GOING TO KILL SOMEBODY"

You both see our little world o' comics differently and I suppose a little bit of difference makes all the difference. Gary might be a tad single-minded in his "pursuit of excellence" and isn't able to see the forest of business and scheduling for the trees of aesthetics and artiness. As a non-schedule-keepin'-son-of-a-beeyitch I can see where he's coming from but I think you're right on the point you made (over and over again) that we have to make an effort to see things from the distributor's and retailer's side of the fence.

Obviously yourself and others who consistently keep up "their half of the bargain" have time and again proven that timeliness and quality can go hand in hand. I think the word "commitment" needs to be brought up here though. There's no doubt that you are committed; to comics, *Cerebus* #300, a schedule, etc. But you can't deny that Mr. Groth is a very committed man also. He, the Comics Journal, and Fantagraphics are one of the few voices shouting on the side of alternative comics — trying to get a word in edge-wise amongst the clamor for the next HOT superhero adventure series.

Where you two differ (besides that little scheduling thingy) is that Gary Groth hasn't realized that no matter how much he might despise what comes out of Marvel, DC, and Image every week, no amount of high-falutin criticism is going to stem the flow. Newsflash: Some people like that stuff, and they buy a shitload of it every stinkin day, with no end in sight. It's the uncouth pillar the comics industry is built upon.

I grew up reading *and* enjoying *Spiderman, Captain America, Batman, Ironman,* and *G.I. Joe.* I sometimes still get a kick out of looking at the better artists and once in awhile vegging-out on a contrived fight-scene plot. There will always be 1,000 superhero books for every RAW, Buzz, and Drawn & Quarterly. 1,000 Jim Lee's for every Clowes, Sim, and Woodring. 1,000,000 Rambo movies for every Citizen Kane. 1,000,000 Harlequin romances for every Of Mice and Men. Life would just be too thought-provoking without an abundance of trash-culture to waste our time on. It's what makes this (and other) countries so fuckin' great.

Surely we need weird, individualistic, alternative comics, I'd go nuts without them, but everybody's just got to realize that the day when quality will triumph over quantity will never come. It's a pipe dream. An overabundance of genre-trash is what makes alternatives alternative.

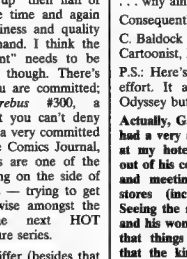
Well, I can't figure out how to segue back into it but I just wanted to reiterate that you made a good point about how weird shit would fare better on some kind of a decent schedule — it's worth a try anyway. I hope that you and Gary can play together nice now. You don't want to miss snack time, do you?

Oh yeah, and another damn thing . . . why ain't Cerebus got no dick?

Consequently Yours,

C. Baldock
Cartoonist, Publicker

P.S.: Here's my latest unscheduled effort. It ain't the Iliad nor the Odyssey but I'm gettin there . . .



Actually, Gary and I sat down and had a very amicable chat in Seattle at my hotel. He's started coming out of his cocoon, travelling around and meeting retailers and seeing stores (including *Comic Relief*. Seeing the store and meeting Rory and his wonderful staff showed him that things are not hopeless and that the kind of store he dreams about actually exists and flourishes). We're still very far apart on the Image question. I see it as a huge departure from the fixation on Marvel; the first major crack in their rapidly crumbling foundation. The gravitational reverse in the collector/investor/adolescent market is shifting attitudes and bringing about large changes. Gary, of course, thinks I've lost my mind and compromised my integrity. In one of the more curious exchanges we had, I pleaded with him to write positively instead of negatively (i.e. *Maus* could not have existed in any other field; had Spiegleman tried to sell it as a novel or a movie or a TV mini-series, he would doubtless have been told to take out the Holocaust, make it "less Jewish", make the father more sympathetic, etc.) Essentially, this says the same thing about popular culture that Gary's been saying all along, but says what is positive about comics, rather than what is negative about everything else. He said that he had already pretty much decided to ease back because it was depressing him writing about how depressing everything is. "Well, you're depressing all of us, too," I said, He got what I like to call his Cheerful Bunker Look on; "Well, that's what I'm here for." One of the more frustrating things about Gary is that he persists in seeing himself as a lone voice crying in the wilderness on behalf of quality instead of a looming presence chanting "Doom! Gloom! All is lost! Give up! Give up!" into an industry-wide public address system. I think he's hurting the very thing he's trying to advocate; small press run iconoclastic comic books by reinforcing the view that they don't sell anyway, so why bother promoting them.

In political vernacular, I would characterize our meeting as "fruitful."

★★★★★★★★★

Hi Dave, Hi Ger:

By now you've been to Phoenix; I'm sorry I couldn't be there (I'm going to try and get to Killeen in December), but I hope you were shown a good time and that the turnout was good.

I read *Comics Journal* 152 too, and the whole issue bothered me. Part of the reason I stopped reading the magazine regularly a few years ago was because of its narrow, narrow definition of "quality". I got tired of being told I was a schmuck because I liked things that weren't producing "quality" to the exclusion of all else, such as eating, breathing, etc. The *Journal* has never understood, for some reason, that some creators are in the business to tell stories as well as they can (which isn't a bad thing), some are in it to make money as well as they can (also not a bad thing), and some are doing their best to do both as well as they can. It seems pretty clear cut to me.

I'm not sure if this pertains directly, but this *Journal* thing does offer me an opportunity to tell my own "Gary Groth Brush With Fame Story." May I?

For my fourteenth birthday, my mother got me a subscription to the *Comics Journal.* She knew I was very into comics and thought that would be a nice gift. And it was, really; I couldn't understand half of what was written (especially the long-winded discourses on Theory and High Art), but I dug the news section and the reviews, and I enjoyed finding out about some of my favorite creators. I kept the subscription for five or six years, then dropped it for reasons that included the one mentioned above.

Sometime during the first year of my subscription, the phone rang during a late weekday afternoon. I was home from school and watching TV.

"Hello," I said.

"Is Adam Beechen there," the voice asked.

I said I was Adam, and the voice returned, with great weight and drama, "Adam, this is Gary Groth from the *Comics Journal*."

My heart skipped a beat. Here was one of the Big Names of Comics, calling me, a snot-nosed kid with a modest collection of comics. What thoughts raced through my head, I can't tell you. Probably, I was figuring I'd been "discovered"; somehow Gary Groth had gotten a hold of the mini-comics I did for my friends in high school.

I said hi again, and told him I liked the magazine.

"Thanks," he replied quickly. "I was wondering if you could do me a favor."

Me? Doing one of the Big Names a favor? Visions of all the glory I could earn by having a Big Name indebted to me danced in my head.

"There are some storage shelves being auctioned off in Scottsdale this week, and we're interested in buying them," he went on. "We'd like you to help us buy them."

Sounded easy. What did I have to do?

"Just go to the auction and pay for the shelves. We'll handle the shipping."

I "uh"-ed and "um"-ed, and Gary Groth said, "We'll reimburse you, don't worry." A good answer; I was worried. My allowance was, like, ten dollars a week.

I asked how much he thought they'd cost.

"Probably between two and three hundred dollars," he answered.

Long pause on my end.

"Mr. Groth," I said, finally, "why did you call me?"

He cleared his throat, and said rather quickly, "We only have two subscribers in Arizona, and the other gentleman lives in Tucson."

I was no longer quite so concerned about what the Big Name thought of me, so I said, "I'm fourteen years old."

Long pause on his end.

Then he said, "Is your mother or father there?"

My feeling is this: If the *Journal* didn't exist, somebody wouldn't necessarily invent it. It simply isn't as important as it wants to believe it is. The audience that likes the same three titles the *Journal* likes just isn't big enough to tailor a magazine to. And the rest of us are tired of being told why what we like is shit, and who we like are assholes. I think you're right, Dave. The window is closing around the *Journal*. Pretty soon the air will be gone, and God knows it was stuffy in there to begin with.

Still loving *Mothers and Daughters*, and looking forward to seeing you in Killeen.

Best,

Adam Beechen
3206 King St. #204
Austin, TX
USA 78705

Sorry, Gary, I couldn't resist.

★★★★★★★★★★

Dear Dave,

A few thoughts prompted by "Last Waltz":

1) First, and most important: Bravo! Your thoughts on the relationship between publishers and retailers struck me as remarkably level-headed and well-reasoned. It seems to me that what more people (creators, publishers, retailers, *and* fans) need to realize is that there ain't no entitlements. You don't *owe* your readers a damn thing, and the fans who get upset when you, in some obscure way, don't live up to their expectations are deluding themselves. On the other hand, fans don't owe you a damn thing, either. There will always be that core audience you referred to, but if other readers decide to drop a book because delays in publishing make it hard to find and hard to follow, that's their right. The logical follow-on to that, which you've already stated, is that if a creator or publisher wants to reach an audience beyond the core, they have to do things the non-core fans look for, like publish regularly and engage in active promotion.

Back in *Cerebus* #96, you published a letter of mine where I said that, as far as *Cerebus* was concerned, I figured the comics specialty market was pretty well tapped out. I sincerely hope you'll prove that letter wrong, and I'm beginning to believe you will.

I will differ with you slightly on one point. I think that, depending on other circumstances, frequency can matter. While *Love and Rockets* continues to come out according to its quarterly schedule (or is my memory faulty?), the combination of infrequent publication, longer storylines, and jumpy narrative leave me enjoying the book a lot less than I used to. "Wigwam Bam," "Poison River," and "Love and Rockets" will probably look a lot better to me when and if I sit down to read them all in one sitting. Other folks on Usenet also seem disenchanted with the title. I may drop *L&R*, the comic, after the conclusion of "Poison River" next issue, and just wait for the reprint volumes. My conclusion? If you know you can only produce an issue once every three or four months, either make the individual issues more self-contained, or wait to publish until you can put out a complete graphic novel.

Sidebar 1: Did you, by any chance, discuss these issues with Martin Wagner? *Hepcats* is a wonderful book and I want it to survive. It is, in fact, the only comic I subscribe to, mainly because Martin published an editorial asking for upfront cash. Assuming you're right, though, it will never get the distribution and recognition it deserves until it starts coming out regularly. Ah well.

Sidebar 2: I hope you won't take offense at this, but part of my reason for reconsidering my position of a few years ago is that *Cerebus* has become a much better book in the interim. When I last wrote, the infamous "four pages of pissing" issue was still a recent memory. My opinion is that somewhere in around issue 90, give or take a few, something clicked. Your narrative became stronger, and your pacing *much* tighter. My opinion of *Cerebus* has gone from "very good and well worth following, despite some low points" to "the best damn comic on the market, bar none."

2) While I find Gary Groth's current ignorance of the art form as stunning as you do, I think you do him a slight disservice, if only by omission. *The Comics Journal* used to matter. I rarely read it these days (in fact, I've barely glanced at the editorial that prompted "Last Waltz"), but there was a time when I bought the *Journal* every month, and read it cover to cover. (Well, I never could get through a Kenneth Smith article.) I even had a couple of letters published and sold them an

article, back in the Tom Heintjes era. It was *TCJ* that publicized Kirby's fight to get his artwork back, that contributed greatly to the publicity that led to DC awarding pensions to Siegel and Schuster, that championed the fight against censorship. And their articles and reviews were as strong as their reporting. I fondly remember R.C. Harvey's writings on "the verbal-visual blend", and Heidi MacDonald's writings on just about anything. Nobody these days fills the niche that *TCJ* used to fill. Finally, whatever the faults of the man and the company, Fantagraphics did help crack open the alternative market, providing one of the first forums for some original and outstanding creators, and they deserve credit for that. Maybe Gary Groth is, in some sense, a has-been. You seem to imply that he's a never-was, which just isn't true.

3) Ah, Image. The triumph of Image, of course, is that it proved that a creator-owned title could be a monster best-seller. The tragedy is that they did it with material no different from, and in many cases inferior to, the standard Marvel and DC fare. I've looked at all of the Image titles to date, and bought about half of the first issues, and the only one I've liked enough to buy another issue of is Larsen's *Savage Dragon.* Granted, I don't buy many superhero titles these days, but I do buy the ones I think are written well, and most of Image just doesn't meet my standards. I'm not yet convinced that Image will be a long-term player. It's already developed a reputation as a company that can't meet its announced publishing dates, as most of the books seem to be shipping late. (I wonder how much of this is due to the time they spend drawing trading cards?) This, combined with the lack of quality, may be enough to number its days.

When it was first announced that you, Moore, Gaiman, and Miller would be writing issues of *Spawn,* the reaction on Usenet was mostly incredulous. You know, "Why would such wonderful writers associate themselves with such crap?", that sort of thing. The more level heads pointed out that, for example, Alan Moore's refusal to work for Marvel or DC has nothing to do with their average level of quality, and everything to do with how they treat creators. Still, I'm curious. No judgement intended or implied.) Why, of all the creator-owned titles out there, *Spawn?* Was Todd the first to ask? Did he offer you bunches of money? Do you just plain like the character concept? Some combination of the three? Or am I being unforgivably nosy?

(Mind you, I think it's a brilliant move on MacFarlane's part. He's a talented artist, and the only Image creator so far to stick to a monthly schedule. My only reason for not buying *Spawn* is that I don't think he's a very good writer at the moment. *I'll* certainly be buying the guest-written issues, and will very likely stick around an issue or two beyond that to see if he's learned anything.)

I'm sorry I didn't make it to the Detroit signing, and *very* sorry I didn't hear the WXYT interview, but that's how things go sometimes. Take care, and keep up the great work.

Regards,

Mark Bernstein

Sidebar 1: Martin earned the animosity of both Diamond and Capital by taking business cards at their Trade Shows and going direct with a lot of stores who were simply unable to get the book. He was (and is) in a life-or-death situation and decided to risk it rather than see *Hepcats* go out of business. There is a window of opportunity in soliciting the distributors; if your book ships to them late, your purchase order is automatically cancelled and you have to resolicit. Martin was late, so the issue that was at the printer was essentially cancelled by Diamond, since they had ordered the most copies. Martin was sitting on two thirds of his print run, facing a three month resolicitation waiting period before the book could ship to the stores which had ordered it. On the one hand, I can understand the distributors' problem; the book-keeping and computer nightmare of keeping orders alive for books that don't or likely never will exist, mostly from fly-by-night publishers. On the other hand, you have fans of a book like *Hepcats* desperately waiting for the next chapter who are having to wait three months for a book that's piled up in Martin's spare bedroom. There's no easy answer to this one, and I'd welcome any ideas from Capital, Diamond, store-owners and fans as to what can be done here.

Sidebar 2: Well, thank you. You're very kind.

2) Gary deserves a lot of credit. "Last Waltz" was a parody of his journalistic style wrapped around a wake-up call. The Journal is still the only place where you are going to read about stores being busted for selling "obscene" material. For that reason alone, they're irreplaceable.

3) I think everyone is falling into the same trap of Company Advocacy and Company Condemnation. Marvel is this. DC is this. Image is this. Image is obviously going to attract a lot of "Take the Money and Run" types. If a creator makes enough money off a first issue to take two years off and NOT working is what he aspires to, then NOT working is what he's going to do. Kevin's having the same problem with Tundra. Some guys if you cut them a cheque for fifty grand will take it, keep living the way they're living and produce the work; they'll just be financially secure. Most (I hate to say) will use the money to NOT work until the money starts to run out. Kevin bought the complete artwork to *Pigeons From Hell* from Scott Hampton and Scott says it really hurt his productivity. Along the same lines, when he agrees to do a project he specifies that he wants a small advance with the larger revenues after publication. Same thing happened to me, to be honest. When the tidal wave of money came in over the phone from the first direct printing of HIGH SOCIETY, we got way off schedule (well, way off schedule for US, anyway). When you're used to drawing because you NEED money, the first reaction to having a lot of money is that you no longer NEED to draw. Which brings us to the Todd-meister. He obviously doesn't NEED money. He WANTS to draw *Spawn* and do it monthly. He likes being able to tell a story without having to clear it first with a guy in a business suit. This will probably shock a lot of you; I LIKE Todd's writing. I have never read anything that is like *Spawn.* The last time I felt that way reading a mainstream comic book was Steve Gerber's *Man-Thing.* I'm looking forward to being a part of it.

★★★★★★★★★★

Dear Dave,

Your musings in *Cerebus* #162 got me thinking about this industry and how what needs to be done. An overview then specifics follow.

Since the inception of the direct market in the late '70's, the comics industry has developed a system whereby publisher, distributor, retailer, and creator may reap substantial benefits. All involved have the potential to earn greater profits than before. The industry has the potential to craft a diversity of product unimaginable with newsstand sales (due to returns which would make it unfeasible). In the 15 years or so since the direct market took hold, the comics market has grown by leaps and bounds, becoming a half-a-billion dollar industry which continues to grow in sales and volume. Even in the mired depression the nation seems to be stuck in, comics seem not to have been affected. Titles are posting unheralded record sales, and creators have the potential of earning greater profits than ever before. Millionaire comics creators seemed laughable a decade ago. Now, it is within reach.

Yet, with all the prosperity out there, the comics industry still has several problems which it will have to face if it truly intends to grow beyond where it currently resides. The possibility of comics reaching mass acceptance is no longer a pipe dream. Yet, gorging the current readership base for greater sales is not in anyone's best interest. A million sales of *Spawn* #1 should only be notable if there are a million readers attached.

Various creators and retailers have attempted to fashion plans to expand the comics market, to ascertain how to reach mass acceptance, and to determine how to restructure the market to survive in the next century. Yet, few seem willing to do what is necessary. Few will take a leadership role, which essentially is putting one's money where one's mouth is. Yet, I think it's important (imperative?) to continue to discuss vital issues so that those who are willing to bear the risk will have researched the topics/problems enough to do the right thing. It's safe and easy to continue on the path trodden. But, the ones who will take the chances are the ones who will reap the true benefits and help carry this industry forward.

What follows are some of the most critical problems facing the industry today with seeds for future thought and discussion. What can be done to repair problems? Is it all up to the reader?

- Retail. The problem with comics retailers is that too few have business sense. Too many retailers started comics shop because of a love of comics but can't carry the concept any further than copying what has gone before. Too many comics shops emulate one another. As has been mentioned elsewhere in volumes, comics shops need to upgrade their appearance. They need to take a new look. They need to add bright lighting (track?), open spaces for browsing (too many crowd shelves together), clean paint or decoration, attractive book-shelves, and lessen clutter. They need to model themselves after bookstores or hobby shops and maintain a professional look. This need not cost $30,000 or more in redecoration funds. But, it does require thought and research before opening the doors. As well, window displays shouldn't be overlooked. Again, clutter is not the answer. Brian Hibb's *Comix Experience* in San Francisco emulates record stores and has artists create original designs for window display. For the passer-by, this is what will attract him/her to stop in and see what the store is about. Further, the staff should be professional, not chatting with friends or looking like they just woke up. They should be knowledgeable and professional (as an aside, I walked in a store and began chatting with the manager; he wasn't aware of what *Shade* was; didn't know that a *Death* mini-series was arriving — and he was the one who did the ordering!!).
- Product. Beyond these seemingly obvious basics, a retailer needs to consider his product. It's too simple to order Marvels and DCs and then spend leftover cash on independents. That's cookie cutter ordering and unacceptable in any business. It may pay the rent but will do little else. What's needed first is to chart titles and see what sells, regardless of publisher. If *Cerebus* sells a dozen copies, order 14–15 the next month. If *Nick Fury* does not sell, don't order the standard run just because Marvel publishes it. This seems so simple but there's still a stigma with independents. Sample independent titles (based on reading advance books and promotional materials). Talk to customers and see what they're looking for. Experiment! Order *Bone* and see if it sells. Or, alternatively, put a display box by the counter and sell it to customers. Discuss it with them. Make it a "special". Make a window display. No one will buy it if they don't know about it and no one will know about it if they don't hear about it. That's the problem with many of Tundra's titles. They would sell more if readers knew they existed. This is more than posting a "special of the month" on the wall. Aggressive advertising in-house is necessary. If an *X-Men* reader comes in and buys *Madman*, the retailer has a customer who will now come in for two books. As well, retailers could do better to expand the stock and display of independent titles, giving them prominence. Only through greater sales of independents can a retailer hope to expand his market (or else waiting for Marvel to release more titles).
- Advertising. Retailers rely too much on customers coming in randomly. Customers need to be informed of what is out there and why they should stop in. Tie-ins with movie theatres, record stores, college campuses, etc. can be done inexpensively. Advertising in local and community papers also needn't be financially draining. Other businesses have an advertising budget — why not comics? In-store signings are crucial, as it builds interest and an audience, as well as good will. Yes, they will be money losers in the short-run, but retailers fail to see the long-term benefits. That's the principal problem with retailers today: they want immediate profits without looking at next month.
- Back issues. For the amount of space they take up in the store compared to the amount of cash generated, there is a disequilibrium. Do retailers really need to maintain a back stock of every comic ever published in the event some fan might want a copy? A back catalogue is necessary but it need not be complete. As well, back issues should not be dead stock. They should be moved. Lower prices would help. Just because Overstreet says a book is worth $10 in mint does not mean it need sell for that. If a retailer can get $5 for it, that's $5 in his pocket as opposed to nothing in his box.
- Expanding the audience. Retailers must do this. They are

on the front lines in their community. They need to reach out and find the new readers. There are a variety of comics out there today. There is something for many readers. They may need to be educated or simply made aware of these titles' existence. Perhaps emulating coffee houses' readings or signings could be done. In any event, this is the retailer's responsibility. A current customer base usually remains stable. Now is the time to do more.

- Distributors. These are the link between publishers and retailers. They need to serve as such rather than their own ends. They need to realize they are not indispensable. Distributors should offer as much information about products as possible. They need to serve as a pipeline. They need to promote smaller titles more than list them in small type at the bottom of some page. While the distribution channels offer little hope for change in the coming years, there is still much they could do.
- Publishers. Ideally, the larger publishers should expand their content beyond super-heroes. *Vertigo* is a worthy attempt. But, it's still not enough. If a reader does not want to read heroic (romantic) fiction, they won't look for *Vertigo* (nor Epic, Marvel, DC, Image, *et al.*). Experimentation is needed more than occurs now. Further, creators who are friends of editors need not immediately have their projects approved. Why was *Skull & Bones* from DC published when the same time and money (and probably greater sales) could have been achieved with *The Crow* or *American Splendor?* DC is doing a better job expanding content and giving creators better deals. Yet, they haven't reached far enough. It's still up to the independents to do such. If proven, then the larger companies will consider it. Advertising is also a key feature which has been overlooked. With much of DC's advertising budget this quarter going to *Robin III*, this leaves other titles without support. Further, it offers no support beyond in-industry advertising. How will potential *Sebastian O.* readers know the book exists? Answer: they won't. The big companies need to find people to work on developing new markets for their books. Even local reps can do this if properly trained.
- Independents. Here is where the real work is being done and where real change can occur. With the larger independents continuing to model themselves after the Big Two, it's fallen to the smaller independents to illustrate what can be done. That means they need to succeed more than ever. Image's arrival is good, as it shows that creators can succeed on their own with their own works. Further, the financial benefits of Image offer creators another viable option. That Image is emulating Marvel product is distressing, but they've made steps that no other independent has to date. For the smaller independents (and self-publisher/creator), these need not simply publish a comic and leave the rest of distributors to market and sell. Smaller publishers need to promote titles themselves. They need to find funding to advertise directly to retailers and readers. They need to talk with retailers directly. They need to give cause why their books can be saleable. They need to find alternative markets (look at Big City Comics' tremendous success outside the comics market). In essence, they need to get out and do work that the publisher and distributor is assumed to (and doesn't properly). The creator/small publisher needs to do this extra work him/herself, even budgeting for financial loss. If a loss is expected on early issues, but the funds are spent on building readership, future issues will exist (which is a triumph itself) and probably make money (look at *Hepcats*). Small publishers are the ones who it falls to to make a difference. They are most likely local and can generate sales in their community beyond a couple per shop. Of course, the product itself must be worthy in the first place.
- Fans. There are active comics fans who write letters, produce fanzines, etc. These readers need to become involved to aid the industry. They need to go out into their community and aid retailers, publishers, etc. They need to offer their services for the titles they truly believe in. If they don't, who else will? It's unfortunate that it falls to the consumer to aid the industry, but others in the chain seem unable or unwilling.

What the industry needs now is savvy retailers who are willing to take chances. These will be people who are familiar with the comics industry, who have the finances to build a customer base over time, and who realize that Marvel (and DC) titles will be the backbone of sales but that more can be achieved. The industry also needs savvy independent publishers and creators who will do more than what's been done. They will publish alternative material that they believe in (not necessarily what has proven to sell in the past). Material that carries the medium forward. And, they will believe in it to a degree of working themselves on getting it to the readers, not exclusively relying on comics shops. Financing will be a problem, but it will be necessary to spend money to make money. Finally, consumers must be educated that a comic need not have bright colors to be good. New readers will be more likely to sample a black and white title and continue in this genre.

I'd love to do this. I'd love to do this all. But I can't. Not alone. Neither can anyone else. It's up to readers and publishers and retailers and distributors and creators to work to find solutions. I'd most welcome thoughts on how to aid the industry, how to get financing, and what other means of tangible support we can do to make this a better industry for us all.

But, then, do we really want to?

Dave, my question to you is, how can I help? How can any individual? *Actively* help. Is it fear of success? If it fear of failure? What is the motivation behind not taking the chance? Essentially, the question is, if you could make a difference, would you? You have. What can the rest of us "involved fans" do?

Mahalo,

Mark Lucas
1100 Granville Avenue #2
Los Angeles, CA
USA 90049-6026

Put as simply as possible, you have to Campaign. I am a hermit by nature and inclination, so you can imagine what the prospect of a year-long Tour was like for me. Signing autographs is easy; everyone is on your side. Going to warehouses and Trade Shows and meeting retailers who have no idea who you are, who sell almost exclusively Marvel Comics and gum cards and such is another thing entirely. Fear of failure, of

humiliation. Picture what it must be like to be a Presidential candidate in New Hampshire, at the factory gates at seven o'clock in the morning, shaking hands with people who don't know you from Adam. The big advantage in promoting comics is that you have something to give the person. One of the best recent examples is *Same Bat Channel* in Massachusetts. Every months, they pick one title to give to every one of their subscribers. They contacted me about *Cerebus* 163, asked me to write a letter that they could photo-copy to go with it. I would've been happy to sell them the books at a distributor discount, but they volunteered to buy them from Diamond's Boston warehouse. Other stores have had great success circulating copies of books that appeal to "real" people in coffee houses, alternative bars, way cool hang-outs. Put a big store sticker on it; available at . . . right away it's not in mint, so no fan boy is going to pick it up (you might want to bend the cover and scuff it just to be sure), but if it's *Sandman* or *Hate* or something like that, it'll probably get passed around and is apt to fall into the hands of someone who'll become a life-long customer.

On an individual basis, there's always photo-copying. Pick a really funny *Cerebus* sequence or two, reduce them and print up a few hundred to hand out (particularly if you can use the photo-copier at work or school). Write the name of your favourite store, "Check out this Way Cool Comic" and encourage people to photo-copy it themselves and pass those around. Don't worry about copyright, or if you really worry about it, put "copyright Dave Sim and Gerhard used by permission". Whether you're a fan or a store-owner, you're all part of the *Cerebus* Campaign if you want to be. Use anything you want in ads, on stationery, fliers, it's only going to help *Cerebus* and the comics environment in general.

Thanks for a great letter. It's gratifying to know that so many people are really interested in improving comics and helping the business side.

★★★★★★★★★★

Dear Dave,

Please, please please tell me you don't really drink Coors Light?! Yucko!! Aside from being run by facist boss-man scum, it tastes like piss and is also radioactive (as there is a toxic facility just 12 short miles away). I am disappointed. (Well, I guess not really too much.)

Jennifer Vermont
4712 NE 24th
Portland, OR
USA 97211

I drink the Coors Light that is brewed in Canada (you know, with, like, alcohol in it, eh?). I tried the American version in Pittsburgh and I thought it tasted like cough medicine. Yucko is right.

★★★★★★★★★★

Dear Dave,

This past Monday, October 5, 1992, you left a message on our answering machine in response to my letter of September 13. In that letter I wrote a frustrated and annoyed page or so to the effect that I'd gone to the Arlington, VA Howard Johnsons for the comic book Con expecting to find you and Ger signing away, only to find that the Con had been the day before (9/12). Your call was a polite, quick response to that letter. In essence, you said that you and Ger had been at that signing all day and that you'd appreciate it if I'd get my facts straight the next time before writing such a letter. Checking the back of *Cerebus* #161 I saw you having listed the Ramada in Falls Church (15–20 minutes away from where I had been) as your site.

Oops.

I left a message at the 0610 phone number on your machine, expressing the most sincere of apologies and offering to further grovel extended apologies to you in person should you wish to call me back. So far, you haven't. Nevertheless, I wanted to make sure you got a written apology from me concerning this matter.

Dave, I have a lot of respect for you (and Ger as well), for what you're doing for the comic industry and for *Cerebus* (my previous letter, printed in #110, sums up a lot of my feelings still). I now have an even greater respect for you for a) responding so quickly and personally (by phone even) to an erroneous complaint, and b) for doing so in such a gracious manner. You certainly could've blasted me (especially at that early of an hour) for my mistake, but you chose to be direct, firm and, well, almost like one friend telling another that I'd fucked up and you didn't appreciate it, but, hey, it's nothing to ruin a friendship over, ok?

Allow me to thank you for your generosity and compassion. I can assure you that I am generally more conscientious and do have my facts more in line than I did in this case. (Like when I quoted you in my Masters thesis, but that's another story). I owe you one. You've not only kept a fan, but deepened my respect.

Again, I apologize for my error, and I appreciate they way you handled the situation. You are, indeed, an artist and a gentleman.

Sincerely,

Tom Franklin
3833K Brentwood Road
Raleigh, NC
USA 27604–1777

I just thought I'd straighten things out before word started spreading that we had cancelled on one of the Great Eastern Cons. No hard feelings. Hope to see you at *Heroes Con* next year.

★★★★★★★★★★

Dear Dave,

I have received your most generous donation of $11,000 for the CBLDF. This is our largest single donation to date, eclipsing an earlier anonymous donation of $10,000. I am asking Thom Powers to contact you regarding a press release unless you object.

It must have been very tempting to cash this check, regardless of its source. Your will-power here is commendable.

I'm so impressed that I will allow you to continue naming your city after me.

Best wishes,

Denis Kitchen
President/Treasurer
Comic Book Legal
Defense Fund, Inc.
P.O. Box 760475
Lathrup Village, MI
USA 48076

What a relief. City council thought they'd have to go back to using "Berlin" when the license expired.

★★★★★★★★★★

His pale naked body was crouched in the far corner of his tiled cell. He held one hand over his genitals, the other tried to deflect as much of the water from the fire hose as he could. His throat was raw from the constant screaming, a scream that didn't even stop when he

slept. Once again I wondered if it wouldn't be more humane to just let him die. As I watched his fecal matter wash from his hair down the drain set into the middle of his floor I couldn't help but feel guilty and ashamed because I knew it was my fault and that was something I would have to live with for the rest of my life. I would have to live with driving my friend, John Bruzan, mad.

It all started innocently enough, I read *Cerebus* and he didn't but he did read comics so he was a potential convert. I followed my usual conversion plan, first I let him see me reading one of the phone books. Then, I let him ask me about it. "Yeah" I tell him, "This book is really different, it's hard to describe though, you almost have to read it yourself." This of course was setting up stage 2, the lending of books.

The next step was giving him a phone book. I started him with *High Society*. A few days after the first one he came to me, his eyes wide, "Hey man, I gotta get some more of dis' stuff" So I got him all my phone books. He was hooked.

After that things went smoothly for a while, he would wait 4 weeks and get his fix like the rest of us. He was almost strong enough to face "the unmentionable event." Almost. Because then it happened, the book was late. Was it a hold up at the printers? Did the distributor screw up? It doesn't matter, the results were the same. He became a gibbering pile of madness, we tried to calm him with back issues but it didn't help he was too far gone.

He's stable now, the missing book finally showed up and the next one was even a little early, but still every one of us wonders. "When will it happen again? When will the madness strike?"

Mike Rogers
724 West Algonquin Apt. #5
DesPlaines, IL
USA 60016

The next time Preney's two colour press breaks down unexpectedly.

★★★★★★★★★★

Dear Dave,

It was a distinct pleasure and honor to meet you at the Phoenix session yesterday, and I look forward to the opportunity to meet with you many more times over the coming years.

I have been thinking much about the nature of your comments in the "Last Waltz" and have some comments of my own that I would offer. Aside from the individual confrontations that you address so eloquently, in fact you have touched on a much larger issue that I doubt that many in the industry have perceived. Let me be so bold as to give an example. At the autograph session yesterday, there was a retailer present who had a table and was selling his wares. It should be noted that the reason people were coming there was the draw of yours, Martin Wagners', and James Owen's fine work. So, this retailer was capitalizing on your work and popularity for his profit. Yet, I overheard him say to someone else that he doesn't carry much in the way of the *Cerebus* line because it doesn't sell. This is the type of attitude that will eventually put him and his enterprise in sore straits. Independent, or to use your words, alternative, comics will sell if they are promoted to the degree that they deserve. Some of the finest artistic work, writing, and imaginative skills are to be found in the Independent works.

What many, if not most of the retailers have failed to perceive is that there is a revolution taking place within the industry. Marvel and DC deserve credit for being the prime builders of today's far flung industry, but the future will be determined by the Independent artists and publishers who have been the momentum behind today's revolution. Now it is time for the retailers to start standing up and being counted. To this end, I will make the following pledge: beginning immediately, B&T Comics will each week offer a promotion for an independent comic in an effort to give that comic greater visibility and readership. A promotion that would feature a "buy one, get another independent at half price" would serve to double the exposure to two different independents each week. If only one store in each of the major metropoiitan areas would undertake such an enterprise, the effects would soon be noticed. Such arrogance as that demonstrated by the retailer I mentioned above would then come to an end.

To the independent publishers, I would have only one admonition. PUBLISH YOUR WORK ON TIME. (Are you listening Image?)

Again, thanks for the opportunity to meet with you, and the invitation to drop by the next time you are out this way is always open. Good luck with the remainder of your tour.

Sincerely,

Chuck Chapman
B&T Comics
365 N. Arizona Ave.
Chandler, AZ
USA 85224

And just in case you think my pal Chuck is all talk and no action . . .

★★★★★★★★★★

Dear Dave,

I apologize for not getting back sooner — busy days in wonderland. Enclosed are your sample copies of *Starchild* #1. My word is good. It shipped on time. *Starchild* #2 goes to the printer Friday, and having one under my belt, I am better prepared to control the overall look and quality of #2 — and it's a honey. Enclosed also are two uncorrected pages from #2. Please note the lettering — when it goes to press it will be flawless — these were only my first attempts using your suggested techniques, and consecutive pages are even better. You have my thanks.

The Signing at B&T Comics was one of the most successful ever held in Arizona. We were scheduled to start at ten, but chose to open earlier due to the line that had begun forming at 7:30. By 10:30 we had a line of over a hundred people in front of the store, and a traffic problem in the street. Chuck Chapman cleared over 250 copies of *Starchild*, and had a Thousand Dollar Day. I sold nearly $400.00 in Art Prints, and was there until after 5:00. By then, several hundred people had come through that door, and every one left happy. When I talk to you, I'll give you the rest of the story, but suffice it to say, the Myth that self published books are unsaleable is a damned fallacy.

Looking forward to the weekend after next — on the local talk show, "Comics News and Reviews," on Friday, meeting you and Martin (with some extra stock on hand) at Atomic on Saturday, and graciously accepting Fred's offer for an adjacent table at the Con Sunday.

As I said, *Starchild* #2 goes to press next week. You also have my permission to reprint the essay from the issue — it presents a view of this industry as assessed by

sensibilities uncommon to the Status Quo. It will shake up a lot of people. It should. And I'm not afraid to do it, because in this race we call comics, people drop out daily, and when the smoke clears, there will be few competitors left. I intend to be one of them. You will probably be another. And I won't be running behind you Dave, but next to you, each of us doing our own thing. Discipline — nice handicap to have, isn't it?

See you at the finish line.

Best Wishes,

James A. Owen
Taliesin Press
1750 South Alma School #119
Mesa, AZ
USA 85210

Chuck offered an autographed copy of *Starchild* #1 to the first one hundred customers at the signing. And this is in a town of about six thousand people and a store he runs out of his house.

★★★★★★★★★★

Dear Dave etc.,

Oh, no, not another adoring fan letter, I guess you must have gotten used to it by now so I'll just say this. Great book chaps. Nuff said.

I have only been buying the comic since the start of *Mothers and Daughters* but in that short time I've become totally absorbed in the great characters, dynamic world, drama and subtle humour of the series. I am a definite tricentennial fan. I first came into contact with the little grey chap in the form of a little lead figure one of my friends has. Where it came from I don't know, but it was just strange enough for me to include a sword wielding Earth-Pig in a role-playing game I was running.

Then, whilst wandering around my local comic store, I came upon the first omnibus edition, flush with money at the time I bought it and filed it away on the shelf at home only reading it very slowly and fitfully. Until I read the first issue of *M&D*. Then, although I was by then a very impoverished student, I bought and read all the other weighty tomes (with the exception of *Jaka's Story* which continues to elude me). Here I am now a hopeless addict, but a happy one when I get my monthly fix of *C.*

The real reason I am writing is because of a possible Cerebus sighting at the movies. I was over at a friends flat, a recent *Cerebus* convert (Hi Jon) having a chat. The subject was, strangely enough, *Cerebus.* He was saying how much he had enjoyed *High Society* and trying to convince me that there was a character based on John Cleese (how I missed this I don't know, Fort Dead Parrot, indeed).

My gaze stayed to the t.v. The film that was being aired was "Throw Momma From The Train", Danny DeVito was just calling Billy Crystal from Hawaii. Crystal wakes from a dream of a classroom, the last shot is a camera panning over a few rows of desks. On one I saw what looked remarkably like a copy of the *Cerebus* book! It was only there for a second, but I am sure it was there.

I just thought you should know about it, or maybe reassure you that the millions you spent on product placement actually worked. A pity I had the book already, but I did feel a desire to rush home and re-read the book. I didn't get to as my friend wanted to borrow it again to do his own re-reading (Hi again Jon).

Keep up the good work, and hey maybe you'll find your way over the pond after the US Tour. Hope so.

All the best,

Steve Watson
7 St. Christophers Ave.
Rothwell
Leeds
England

Everyone who rushes straight out to rent "Throw Momma From The Train" should write "I am a *Cerebus* Fan-Boy" one hundred times and send it to Steve. (Or fan-girl as the case may be).

★★★★★★★★★★

Sir,

Apparently, eunuchs don't go bald.

Please bear this in mind.

Yours Insincerely,

H. Motes
286 Holmbury House
Loughborough Park
London SW9 8NP

Seems a terrible price to pay for a full head of hair, though, don't you think?

★★★★★★★★★★

GREETINGS A/V,

This is a letter I've been meaning to write for a long time; however, two recent events finally pushed me in front of the keyboard.

First, in issue #161 you printed a preview of Jeff Smith's *Bone.* I know this is backwards, but, it's because of *Bone* that I started reading *Cerebus.* I'm rather new to the world of books with pictures (less than two years) and mistakenly figured "funny" animals equated to silly. However, I saw a preview of *Bone,* bought a few copies the next day, and "the rest is history." I, too, believe Jeff Smith is one of the best-kept secret surprises of 1992 and it's great to see him get the exposure.

Second occurrence, I'm reading *Cerebus* more-or-less in order. I'm able to do this because of the reprint books (Thank You) and have just about finished *Church & State.* Unable to find *Melmoth* or *Jaka's Story* I phoned your order line. It's been only a week and in the mail today I received confirmation someone actually noticed my order. This is certainly a contrast to some other companies I've ordered from where months go by with no correspondence and no merchandise. They did, however, cash my check.

It's easy to overlook when things go smoothly and only acknowledge errors or complaints; so *Congratulations* on a smooth-running organization that treats customers as real people.

Cerebus is wonderful. From the incredible use of blacks, to the fascinating artwork, the subtle and not-so-subtle humor, the complex, intricate, knowledgeable storylines, and Cerebus himself with his ATTITUDE. He gets away saying and doing so many things I must, often with difficulty, keep to myself. (I'm in sales and must suffer fools with a smile rather than a sword.)

One of my only true regrets this year is missing the *Cerebus* US Tour '92 when you were in Atlanta in August.

Beast wishes,

Diana Bringardner
616 Catawba Avenue
Davidson, NC
USA 28036–9382

Well, maybe I'll get to meet you at *Heroes Con* next year. (How about that, Shelton, two plugs and you haven't even sent me the dates and name of the hotel yet).

★★★★★★★★★★

Dear Dave, Gerhard and all the guys and gals who read *Cerebus,*

How ya doin'? Now, . . . the following passage is from the inside front cover (is that right?) of Naura Hayden's *How To Satisfy*

A Woman Every Time . . . and have her beg for more! I am *highly* recommending this book to anyone and everyone . . . especially the fellas. Here goes:

"In a survey Naura Hayden conducted when she wrote *Isle of View (say it out loud)* in 1980, she interviewed 486 women and was astonished by the results.

310 said they faked orgasm *every* time they had intercourse,

124 said they faked orgasm *most* of the time they had intercourse, and

52 said they faked orgasm *some* of the time they had intercourse.

Naura tells of her *own* experience in "faking", and how, before her survey, she thought she was the only woman with this problem.

After the results of the survey, Naura saw the great need to write a book giving explicit details about how a woman can be totally satisfied by her mate *every time* they make love. And of course when this happens, there will no longer be any need for any woman to ever fake it with her mate again.

She has put together the *first* and *only* book that fully explains *why* almost every woman does not orgasm during intercourse, why the vast majority fake orgasm during intercourse, and what a man can do to guarantee a total orgasm during intercourse for his woman.

The reason I wrote this letter to Aardvark Comment is because I know it will reach *at least* the several thousand *Cerebus* readership. So, again, I am *highly recommending* this book. If you want to have the special capability to drive the woman you love completely out of her mind then do it. Buy this book. It really does work! Believe me!

So don't just think of yourself and leave your pal unsatisfied and frustrated. Buy this book (it's a big time bargain at $14.95, red w/ white and black lettering) and learn how to *really* pleasure your woman. Well, I did my good deed for the day. Thanx for the space Dave. I appreciate it.

This has been a public service announcement courtesy of,

Brooke Smith (yes, I'm a guy)
9 Hartley Terrace
Allston, MA
USA 02134

P.S. I dare everyone to check this book out. It will vastly improve you and your gal's sex life. And also make her happy and satisfied w/ your relationship. In turn you will be happy and loved in a way you never thought possible.

P.P.S. If you buy it and utilize it write me and let me know what happens.

Or if you don't want to spend the $14.95, you could just get a woman who knows how to show you. That's how we learned in the olden days.

★★★★★★★★★★

Dear Dave,

Last night I saw a commercial that used an Iggy Pop song to sell Bud Lite.

Rock and Roll is dead.

Mournfully Yours,

Philip J. Flores
9521 SE Eola Hills Rd.
Amity, OR
USA 97101

And you're just figuring this out now?

★★★★★★★★★★

Dear Mr. President,

I must admit — I picked up my first issue of *Cerebus* for "kiks" — but now I'm hooked! I've started a *Cerebus* fan club at my high school (I'm it) and we spend our time talking about the finer things in life such as when "*Cerebus* the Movie" is being released.

Now the main reason I wrote is because of my best friend Charles Maib. Soon after reading MY first copy of *Cerebus*, he sold his entire Main Stream comic book collection to finance a *Cerebus* collection. He now owns every issue to date. It would kill him to see his name in print so I'm doing this to kill him.

Well that's all from Eagan and the Eagan High School *Cerebus* Fan Club.

Thanks!

Joe Banks
578 Prairie Cr. E.
Eagan, MN
USA 55123

And now poor Charles is dead. How sad.

★★★★★★★★★★

People,

Walking through a city bookshop the other day I noticed a book on a display shelf entitled *All Men Are Bastards*. I wondered to myself how many times I had heard this utterly despicable and offensive phrase. I also wondered to myself what would happen if the book was called "All Women Are Bitches", or "All Women Are Whores". I tell you what would happen, there would be an absolute uproar. Feminists would be standing up shouting and screaming about it being sexist bullshit. However does anyone stand up and say that the phrase "all men are bastards" is a sexist phrase. Oh no, no one says anything. There's not even a whimper.

Why?

I object to feminists who strongly believe in women's rights, but who in the next breath talk about men as being "all the same", and "only after one thng". To me this is the most offensive kind of person I could ever hope to meet.

I also object to those women who do not give a shit about men's rights for instance, women normally have the final say in abortion, and normally automatically have greater rights of custody over children in divorce proceedings. I can assure you that the terminating of a baby you want but will never have, or the wrenching away of one's son/daughter in divorce is one hell of a lot more painful than any affront that could be caused to your feminist morals. I'm not going to venture an opinion on whether or not I agree with the current abortion/custody rights, but do they sound equal to you? I'm sure a lot of prospective fathers or fathers going through custody battles might have something to say about this.

Why don't feminists ever campaign for dirty jobs like a dustman? I don't think I've ever seen a female dustman.

Why don't feminists ever campaign to go fighting wars in the army. Men both young and old, some sill teenagers, some with wives, children, babies, sacrifice their lives for you. Yes I'm aware that some women go to war but that number is minuscule relative to the amount of men. I am also aware that there are biological differences between men and women which make men better equipped for physical fighting, but to speak to many feminists they seem to forget this fact in many of their arguments.

For those feminists who are outraged that women are shown as sex objects by the media, I can assure you that it is equally degrading for men to be constantly

portrayed as womanising sex crazed maniacs who are constantly drooling at the mouth, at every woman who walks past, with only one thing on the mind. This image is conveyed to so many women through the media that many women believe that this is all that men are about.

With a few exceptions on both sides, men and women generally have equal sex drives — it's how we're built. Therefore to those who think that men are only after one thing then women must be only after one thing also.

The next point that I would like to raise is that of sexual double standards. The fact that if a woman sleeps around she is a slut, and if a man sleeps around he is a stud. Many feminists bitterly attack men for holding this view, but from my experience it is generally women who hold this opinion more than men. Many is the time that I've heard women talk about other women behind their backs, calling them slags or tarts for sleeping around. To those feminists who condemn men for holding this view try damning your own kind first.

I am also concerned that there are a few feminists who are motivated not by concern and compassion for their fellow women, but simply by hatred for men. Those who thrive on attacking men, and get a kick out of it. It is sick, twisted, screwed up people like this who give the feminist movement a bad name, and if there are any people out there who are like this, then I urge them to go to sleep and not to bother to wake up. The world would be a better place without them.

I am now at the main point in my letter. As a man I am frustrated by the fact that I am constantly hearing what women want, and want, and want, but do not hear what men want. This is the main inequality that I see in today's society. The fact that there are extremely strong pressure groups for women's rights, but absolutely none for men.

To those feminists who believe passionately in women's rights but couldn't give a fuck about men's rights, who couldn't give a shit about the inequality in abortion rights/custody battles, who think that men are only after one thing, then I damn you, and spit in your face.

Matt, England

Have a nice day, Sinead O'Connor.

Everyone is welcome to attend the

"Yippee–It's–Over–End–Of–The–U.S.–Tour" party

SATURDAY JANUARY 9TH 1993

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FEATURING →

GALLERY

SWOON MORTALS

Cerebus 164
page ten

pen and ink on
illustration board

Characters and lettering
by Dave Sim.
Backgrounds by Gerhard.

10 x 15

minimum bid:
$150.

bidding closes
January 7, 1993
5 P.M. EST.

GALLERY

I am human... nevermore
I am... $WOON mortals.
OH, GREAT AND POWERFUL SWOON/MORTALS...
$WOON
...comma...
mortals
OH, GREAT AND POWERFUL SWOONCOMMA MORTALS...
You try my patience... I am
just $WOON

GALLERY

SAVE THE AARDVARKS

Cerebus and Raccketty Ann

Cerebus pencilled and inked by Dave Sim. Raccketty Ann and assorted aardvarks pencilled and inked by Cathy Hill. Lettering by Cathy Hill. Colour by Gerhard.

pen and ink and water-colour dyes on illustration board 10 x 15

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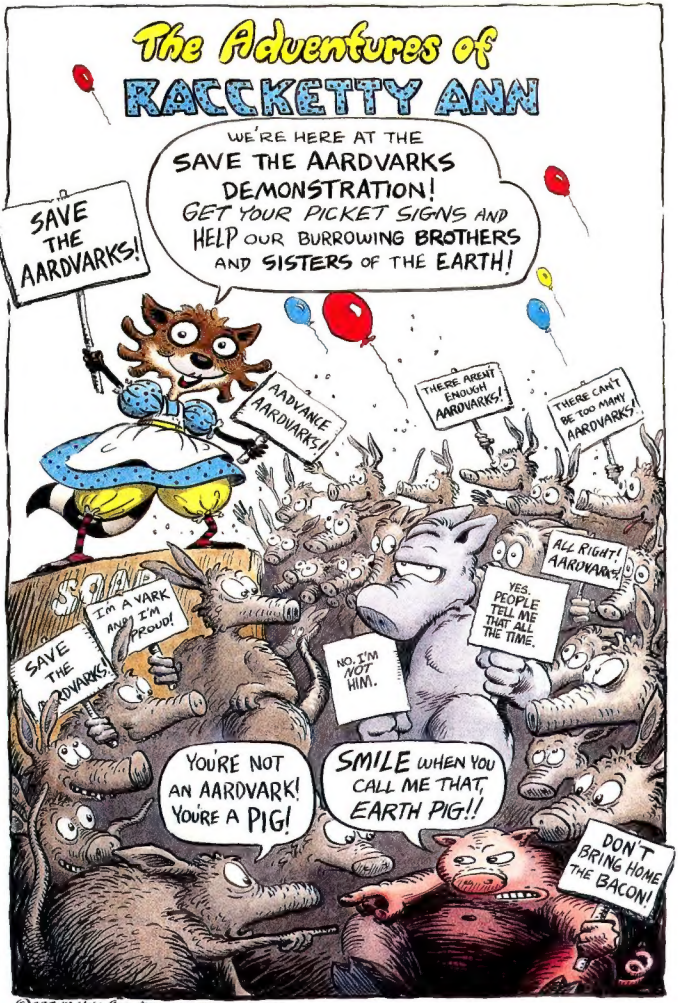
The Adventures of
RACCKETTY ANN
WE'RE HERE AT THE SAVE THE AARDVARKS DEMONSTRATION! GET YOUR PICKET SIGNS AND HELP OUR BURROWING BROTHERS AND SISTERS OF THE EARTH!
SAVE THE AARDVARKS!
AADVANCE AARDVARKS!
THERE AREN'T ENOUGH AARDVARKS!
THERE CAN'T BE TOO MANY AARDVARKS!
ALL RIGHT! AARDVARKS!
YES. PEOPLE TELL ME THAT ALL THE TIME.
NO. I'M NOT HIM.
I'm A VARK AND I'M PROUD!
SAVE THE RDVARKS!
YOU'RE NOT AN AARDVARK! YOU'RE A PIG!
SMILE WHEN YOU CALL ME THAT, EARTH PIG!!
DON'T BRING HOME THE BACON!
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